# *D--ry-L--ne* P--yh--fe Broke Open.

IN A

# LETTER

TO

Mr. G——.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Theatrum
641. f. 8
7

# D–ry-L–ne P[L]yh[ou]se Broke Open.

## IN A LETTER TO Mr. G——.

*Dere you ſal ſee vat you ſal ſee.*
*Vide* Raree Shew.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

# *D--ry-L--ne* P--yh--fe Broke Open.

IN A

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TO

# Mr. G——.

*SIR,*

IT is become a Sort of Faſhion (and I don't doubt but you are vain of it) either greatly to abuſe you, or extravagantly to applaud you. The Preſs ſwarms with Pamphlets addreſs'd to you; and, how the Authors or Printers

can find it worth their while to publiſh 'em, is a Matter of ſome Wonder. I cou'd wiſh my Countrymen had ſomething of more Importance to ſhew their Concern about; but, as the Diſorder is epidemical, no Wonder a Lover of the Theatre (as I am) has catch'd the Infection. I ſee others write as little qualified as myſelf, ſo I take up my Pen, and ſay with your Favourite, *Richard*,

*With all my Heart, I'll not be out of Faſhion.*

I intend, in the following Sheets, to addreſs you in a new Manner; I mean, *Impartially*. I ſhall not attack you with the Virulence of your Enemies, nor with the equally unjuſt Warmth of your Friends; I ſhall fairly conſider you as a Servant of the Publick, accountable for many Things your Favourers acquit you of, nor guilty of a Multitude of Sins, the Prejudic'd (on the other Side) wou'd heap upon you. I don't expect to get any Thanks from you, for my particular Coolneſs in this Affair: You imagine, I ſuppoſe, that one of your Conſequence, ought not to be gaz'd at thro' a Medium; that Extreams (no matter which Way)

keep

keep up the Bubble, Reputation; and that your Dignity is lower'd by a calm Conſideration of you. You wou'd not ſtir abroad (by your own good Will) but in a Whirlwind; and, provided Noiſe and Clatter attend you, you don't much care, whether you are taken for Angel or Devil.

Tho' you may think I am a little too ironical; yet, aſſure yourſelf, I am your Friend, and of the beſt Sort; for I will neither turn your Head with my Praiſes, or goad your Heart with my Cenſures; I will deliver to the Publick, and you, my unprejudic'd Opinion of Theatrical Government and Tranſactions; and, as I don't expect any Thanks from either Party, nor from you in particular, I ſhall content myſelf with ſpeaking my Mind freely (for I have an undoubted Right) nor will it much diſturb me, ſhou'd theſe my Endeavours fail of Succeſs. So, Sir, you ſee, I am a Man (as Lord *Foppington* ſays) of great *Non Chalence*: Yet I have not ſo very humble an Opinion of myſelf to think you may not profit by my Obſervations; tho', at the ſame Time, I have ſo high a one of you, that I'm afraid

afraid you'll think it incompatable with your Station to take Hints of Amendment from a Six-penny Pamphleteer: However, without conſidering whom I ſhall pleaſe or diſpleaſe, I ſhall open my Budget, and ſo pick and chuſe, as your Fancy directs you.

Your taking upon you the Management of *D——y-L——e* T——re, was, before the Opening of the Houſe, almoſt unanimouſly agreed to be an imprudent Step——your Succeſs hitherto has diſappointed your Enemies, and ſet your Friends *on the high Horſe*: However, the firſt will never loſe Scent of you; 'tis the Buſineſs of the Pack to open, whenever they think they have the leaſt Likelihood of hunting you; and, upon my Word, I have been ſo pleas'd with the Chace, that tho' no keen Sportſman myſelf, I am a good Obſerver of thoſe who are, and ſhall give you a ſmall Account of what I have ſeen and heard within theſe few Months, that you may take your Meaſures accordingly.

In the Month of *September* laſt, I was in a certain Coffeehouſe. The Playhouſe being then, as now (notwithſtanding

ſtanding our War with *France* and new Taxes) the chief Subject of our Diſcourſe, a young Gentleman ſtood up with great Warmth; and, what Meaning I cou'd collect from his Hurry of Ideas, and Volubility of Tongue, was to the following Purpoſe——*D——n me, Gentlemen, is it not a Shame, we ſhou'd be impos'd upon by this inſignificant S——l? the Manager of* D——y-L——e, G——k, *I mean. He is become Patentee, and now intends to uſe us as he pleaſes. He knows* R——h *can make no Oppoſition againſt him, and ſo he will cram down our Throats the old damn'd Plays, damnably acted, without giving himſelf the Trouble of reviving others, or acting himſelf. Will he, by* G——*d*, ſays a ſecond, *then let us nip him in the Bud — Here, Gentlemen, is the beſt Cure* (ſhaking his Stick) *for Diſobedience either in Actors, or Managers. Let us riſe, at once—— this Moment——and go pull the Houſe about his Ears.*

Theſe ſpirited Harangues inflam'd the whole Coffeehouſe: The Spark ran from Critick to Critick; and all, to a Man, were preparing for your Overthrow; when

when a grave elderly Gentleman was imprudent enough to desire 'em to hear Reason; at which they all turn'd quick upon him, and hustling him up, ask'd him, with some Warmth, what he had to say—— *Gentlemen*, said he, G——k *keeps his Bed: I know one of his Physicians who attends him; and, 'tis his Opinion, that acting in a Fit of the Ague and Fever wou'd be little Entertainment to the Town, and some Prejudice to him.*

This was deliver'd in so dry and calm a Manner, that some burst out a laughing; others abated their Fury for that Time, but mutter'd future Vengeance: But all agreed, you shamm'd Fevers and Agues when you pleas'd; that you would deceive the whole College of Physicians, and had impos'd upon some so far, to lye in Bed six Weeks, the latter End of last Season; had suffer'd yourself to be blister'd, bled, physick'd, *&c.* all that Time, meerly for the Satisfaction of putting a Stop to a Play, by which *R——h* would have been so considerable a Gainer.

From this Accident (without entering into the Merits of the Cause) I cou'd easily

eaſily foreſee what Difficulties, Dangers, and Diſcouragements, you wou'd unavoidably meet with in your preſent Situation. And let me tell you, Sir, (however wary and wiſe you may think yourſelf) that your Inconveniences will, at leaſt, be equal to your Profits; and, if your Temper is of the quick, fretful Kind, I wou'd ſooner be the Firſt String in the Fiddle of a Country Scraper, than one of your ſmall Guts. Perhaps, indeed, if you don't ſnap in the ſtretching, Time may wear you down to Inſenſibility, and you may become as callous and indifferent to the Cenſures of the World, as your Brother *R——h*, or even *C——y C——r* himſelf.

You have ſeveral Sorts of Enemies and Friends: Some of the firſt envy your Succeſs, and Faſhion; others really think the utmoſt Theatrical Merit, can never deſerve what you have gain'd. Theſe diſcourage you from Principle; and, let me tell you (don't be angry) they may have ſome Truth and Juſtice on their Side. Others again hate you, from their perſonal Attachments to other People; ſo that when you offend either Actor, Author,

Author, or others, their Friends naturally become your Enemies, and will always join the Cry when 'tis up againſt you. So you ſee, Mr. G——*k*, how juſt a Reſemblance mock Greatneſs bears to real; for in the little Sphere of the Manager, as well as in that of the M——r, there are retrograde Planets, Aſpects malign, Male-Conjunctions, and fatal Influences.

Your Friends (of which there is no inconſiderable Number) are equally in Extreams with your Enemies; and conſequently, ſometimes, equally ridiculous. I am ſpeaking now of your perſonal Attachments; for thoſe who like you for your Performance only, are, give me Leave to ſay, the moſt reaſonable of them all; and, provided you entertain 'em well at the Theatre, and give 'em *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Bayes*, &c. with Propriety and Decorum, and at the uſual Price, they won't trouble their Heads whether Mr. G——*k* has offended Authors, wrong'd his Actors, lain with the Actreſſes, or ev'n robb'd a Church.

I confeſs to you, that the great Number of Accuſations which are daily brought againſt you on one Part, and the Encomiums

miums beſtow'd on you by the other, are equally unaccountable. If you are the Creature your Ill-wiſhers ſometimes repreſent you, you deſerve H——g; and, if the Man your Friends deſcribe you, you ought to be canoniz'd: In ſhort, I quarrel with the firſt, for not believing you are worſe than *Jonathan Wild*; and offend the laſt, by thinking that *Roſcius* was as good an Actor, and *Plato* as good a Man.

But leaving theſe Gentlemen to fight it out by themſelves, I will now lay the Difficulties of your preſent Situation before you, and endeavour to ſhew you where, I think, you have err'd, where you have acted judiciouſly; and how you may, in ſome Meaſure, avoid much Ill-will and Complaint for the future.

I am not ſo Self-ſufficient, to imagine I may not ſometimes err in the following Remarks: We who only ſee Things before the Curtain, and are unacquainted with the Springs of your Theatrical Actions, often make wrong Judgments: There is ſome Modeſty ſure, Mr. G——*k*, in owning this; and all I expect for it, is, that you will return me as much in Kind, by

believing *you* may have Errors, and that it may be in the Power of an impartial Spectator to give a uſeful Hint, or make a juſt Obſervation.

But to the Matter—— Firſt, let it to your Praiſe be ſpoken, that you are reſtoring the Old Houſe of *D——y-L——e*, to the old Conſtitution it enjoy'd under the Government of *B——h*, *W——ks*, and *C——r*. Your Enemies cannot deny you the Merit of introducing Decency and Regularity into that late State of Anarchy and Confuſion. The long dark Reign of *F——d* had made the Stage rather the Seat of Uproar and Conteſt, than of Poetry and Politeneſs: And I aſſure you, 'tis no ſmall Compliment to you, that we both ſee and feel the Revolution.

That you have begun well, I allow; that you may continue ſo, I wiſh; and yet I fear many probable Circumſtances may ariſe to diſconcert your Meaſures, weaken your Strength; and, of Conſequence, leſſen your Succeſs. Give me Leave to mention ſome of 'em—— Are not the Minds of Actors in general (you can anſwer my Queſtion) inclin'd to change?

And

And has not this Diſpoſition ſtrongly appear'd from the many late Theatrical Alterations? Have any three principal Performers kept together for three Seaſons, ſince the Management of *B——th*, *W——ks*, and *C——r*? And was it not Neceſſity, more than Inclination, kept 'em from wandering ev'n then? A *Cartel* ſubſiſted at that Time between the two Houſes, and every Sheep that ſtray'd from its Fold, was ſhut out of both.

This Scheme, in my Opinion, was moſt injurious to Acting: It hinder'd many Men of Genius from riſing on the Stage; and conſequently, brought on that Dearth of Merit, and Scarcity of good Actors, which immediately follow'd the Expiration of that Contract. For my Part, I think, the want of Liberty in any Profeſſion, muſt be the Deſtruction of it; and, as an *Engliſhman*, and Well-wiſher to the Stage, I hope there will be always a free Paſſage from one Houſe to the other——Oppoſition begets Emulation; Emulation, Merit; and, when Managers fight *hardly*, the Publick are the better for the Conteſt.

I muſt

I muſt own to you, Mr. *G——k*, that I ſhall always hope to ſee more Theatrical Strength againſt you, than there is at preſent. I don't imagine you can be diſpleas'd at this Wiſh; for, where there is no War, how can a Commander in Chief have Opportunities to exert his Talents, in the double Capacity of Soldier and General? I allow your Powers in both; but eaſy repeated Conqueſts, will naturally bring on Indolence and Supineneſs: Therefore, let the Fate of *Hannibal* at *Capua* be ever in your Mind, leſt *R—— h* (who like *Fabius*, is remarkable for *Delay*) ſhou'd rally his Pantomime Forces, and ſurprize you in the midſt of your Revels and Exceſſes at *Drury-Lane*.

You ſee, Sir, tho' I may ſomewhat affect your Pride, by diſcovering your Errors, I take care to keep up your Importance, by my Alluſions and Compariſons. We have all our Weakneſſes; and, if you will grant me now and then an Error as a Manager, I will allow you fifty for it as a Writer; this I can tell you, wou'd be no bad Bargain, if every Body wou'd be kind enough to think of me, as I do of myſelf.

But

But to reſume my Subject —— I believe it will be granted me, that Actors have a ſtrong Propenſity to change; and, notwithſtanding you may be juſt in the Diſpoſition of Parts, regular in your Payments, mild in your Government, yet even the Succeſs they contribute to will often create Envy and Uneaſineſs. Sometimes imaginary, as well as real Grievances, beget Factions. You have, Sir, Patriots and Projectors behind the Scenes, who dream of a Theatrical Ballance; and, not being well affected to the Government, will watch all Opportunities to put darling Schemes into Execution.

You ſee, I know more than you cou'd imagine, therefore don't turn up your Noſe in Contempt of me, but lay it quietly to the Ground, and I may, perhaps, put you upon a Scent, may be of ſome Service to you. Though I have ſincerely confeſs'd, that I wiſh there may be ſtronger Force againſt you another Campaign; yet, don't imagine from that, I wiſh you leſs Succeſs than you have at preſent. I believe (let what will happen) you muſt ſhare the Favour of the Town: But I am confident, were you put more

upon

upon your Mettle, there wou'd be greater Novelty and Variety in our Entertainments; therefore, as well as I like *you*, I regard myſelf and the Publick more; nor do I think, if I had perſonal Attachments to you, that I ſhou'd alter my Opinion, for the ſake of your private Concerns.

Since I have fairly told you my Thoughts and Wiſhes upon this Affair, I will now endeavour to convince you in what Points you have fail'd as a Politician, and where your Conduct has ſeemingly been inconſiſtent with your Intereſt.

'Tis confidently reported you might have engag'd Mr. *Q*——; nay ('tis ſaid) he offer'd himſelf to you, and that the firſt People of Faſhion have preſs'd you to receive him—If this is true, how can it be reconcil'd with your Policy?——It is certain, that *Q*——, united to you, and *C*——, muſt be an over-match for any Theatrical Oppoſition; and, I cannot think that your Judgment is ſo weak, or your Paſſions ſo ſtrong, to let any former Miſunderſtandings between you (if there have been any) ſo apparently prejudice your Intereſt, or that any Liking to another

another Performer (tho' of Merit) ſhou'd draw off your Eye from ſo principal an Object. I am not ſorry, but ſurpriz'd, you don't ſecure your Succeſs hereafter by this Union; for, as I ſaid before, my chief Regard is not for you, but for the Publick: And it is ſtill my Maxim, founded by Experience, that a ſtrong Emulation between the Houſes, is the better for the Town and the Actors; and nothing can produce that Emulation, but a Diviſion of the Theatrical Merit.

I own to you, I have no perſonal Regard for the above-mention'd Actor; and, if I allow that you are poſſeſs'd of a good *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Richard*, *Chamont*, *Caſtalio*, *Harry* the Fifth, *Othello*, &c. yet let me likewiſe add (tho' you think ever ſo vainly of yourſelf, or warmly of your Friend) *Great Britain* does not produce ſuch a *Brutus*, *Othello*, *Cato*, *Zanga*, *Pierre*, and *Horatio*, in Tragedy; nor ſuch a *Maskwell*, *Pinchwife*, *Jaques*, *Old Batchelor*, Sir *John Brute*, and *Falſtaff*, in Comedy. I am convinc'd you think with me, and therefore I muſt beg Leave to repeat it again, that I am ſurpriz'd at this Part of your Conduct; for,

were

were it not ſeemingly incompatible with your *Intereſt*, Mr. G——*k*, I aſſure you I ſhou'd not be ſurpriz'd at all.

This undeniably is an Error of Omiſſion: And now give me Leave to mention ſome of your Works of Supererogation——What Occaſion (in the Name of Common-Senſe) had you for *French* Dancers? Was not this loading *Theſpis'* Cart with unneceſſary expenſive Lumber, which ſerve only to weaken the Carriage, and endanger the Axletree? If you had dropp'd this foreign Rubbiſh, at a certain Door in the *H——y-M——t*, and taken up the broad Bottom of Sir *John* in their ſtead, you wou'd have found the Knight leſs burthenſome, tho' he had had his three Friends in *Kendal-Green*, and his *ſeven in Buckram* to attend him.

I have ſeen a very genteel, well-imagin'd Copy of Verſes addreſs'd to you, in the Second Volume of *Miſcellany Poems*, lately publiſh'd by *Dodſley*; in which, among others, are the following Lines:

*No more the poor polluted Scene,*
*Shall teem with* Births of Harlequin;
*Or vindicated Stage ſhall feel*
*The Inſults of the Dancer's Heel.*

Now,

Now, Sir, when your Conduct is oppoſite to the above Sentiments, the Panegyrick in 'em becomes the ſevereſt Satire.

Your Revival and Repetition of the old Comedy, *Albumazar*, occaſion'd much Murmuring among thoſe Youths of Spirit, call'd the *Town*. I muſt confeſs, I was entertain'd with the Play; and, in my Opinion, there is true Humour, Character, and diverting Incidents to ſupport it; and had you taken it in your Head to act *Trincalo* yourſelf (a Part well worthy of you) it wou'd have produc'd more Profit to the Manager, and leſs Complaint from the Audience——But if you think a Score of Rhimes, repeated by Way of Prologue, will ſatisfy your Gueſts, you are miſtaken.——If I go to the beſt Tavern, and the *Cook* only dreſſes the *Soup Meagre*, and leaves the reſt of the Dinner to his *Scullions*, I have Reaſon to complain of the Uſage——In ſhort, we expect to ſee you in *Characters*, for in ſpeaking of *Prologues*, *Epilogues*, and ſuch like, there cannot poſſibly be Six-pence difference between you and any Bellman in Town; and to me (as well as others) a Prologue by

*Davy G——k*, is as insignificant as a Song by *Tommy L——e*.

What Applauses were bestow'd upon you, by Men of real Taste and Lovers of the Stage, the Beginning of the Winter, for your judicious Regulation of the Scenes, by an Advertisement to this Effect——*As many and frequent Complaints have been made by the Audience, on Account of Gentlemen coming forward and crowding the Stage, the Managers are oblig'd to advertise, that no Gentlemen can be admitted behind the Scenes for the future.*——What an excellent Design was this? And how decent and regular did your Plays appear, while you persever'd in it? But on a sudden this Seat of Decorum is once more over-run by the *Goths* and *Vandals*: At present the Beaux pop in and out with as little Opposition as Modesty; and have made so absolute a *Burrow* of the Stage, that unless they are *ferretted* out by some Means or other, we may bid farewel to Theatrical Entertainments.

An old dry Gentleman, who sat by me the other Night in the Pit, was proposing a Scheme to exclude these pretty

Fellows

Fellows from the Scenes, and with their own Conſent: He was ſaying, that if you wou'd fix up a Looking-glaſs in every Box, it wou'd certainly draw 'em to that Part of the Houſe; for the double Pleaſure of ſeeing themſelves, and being ſeen and admir'd by the Ladies there, wou'd be preferrable to that, of being ſeen only, and not admir'd, on the Stage.

To be ſerious; I hope it is not the Conſideration of their paying ſomething more behind the Scenes, that induces you to admit 'em; for take my Word, in the End, you will be a great Loſer by this moſt intollerable Innovation.

If there is any Juſtice or Weight in the foregoing Obſervations, you, perhaps, wou'd not chuſe to be too ſeverely preſs'd with others of the ſame Sort; therefore, by Way of Reſpite, I will indulge you with a ſhort Collection of various and contradictory Allegations, which are ſpread about in Coffeehouſes againſt you, and which wou'd have a bad Effect, did they not act like Counter-poiſons, one againſt the other.

If you go into one Coffeehouſe, you will hear a Knot of Criticks inveighing againſt

againſt you for not acting oftener; at the next, a Cluſter of Youths, calling your Honeſty in queſtion, for playing ſo much more for yourſelf, than you did for other Managers——Away, to a third, and your Partiality to *B*——, and your Uſage of *Q*——, are the Topicks of Converſation; when perhaps, at another End of the ſame Coffeehouſe, *B*——'s Friends are condemning you for not doing him Juſtice; while Half a Dozen Friends, who are drinking Punch in the little Room behind the Bar, are d——g you for giving *B*—— all the Parts, and ſwear you have clapp'd the Patent under your Pillow, given up yourſelf wholly to Eaſe and Pleaſure; and, provided you reap the Fruits of a Manager, you are not ſollicitous for the Reputation of an Actor—— Upon this, Proofs are brought in Defence of their Aſſertions——*viz.* Prologue at Opening of the Houſe——Ditto to *Albumazar*——Chorus to *Henry* the Fifth ——Your frequent Repetition of Characters of little Conſequence, ſuch as *Chamont*, *Haſtings*, *Lothario*, Capt. *Plume*, *Abel Drugger*, Sir *John Brute*, &c. and your ſeldom appearing in thoſe of greater,

ſuch

ſuch as *Hamlet*, *Richard*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, &c.——Thus they talk, thus they argue, and thus contradict each others Sentiments; and, might I deliver my Opinion upon this Head, I think, among all theſe various Conjectures, Accuſations, and ſprightly Determinations, none of 'em, as yet, have hit the Mark: Therefore, with your Leave, I'll *take Aim*, and have one *ſhot* myſelf.

I have ſeen a Play acted in the Country by Strollers, where, from a Scarcity of Players, one of the *Dramatis Perſonæ* has been oblig'd to act his own Part, and read the other concern'd with him in the ſame Scene——I ſhall borrow the Hint, and proceed in that Method——You are ſuppos'd, Mr. G——, to be brought to the Bar——I ſhall firſt, as Judge, ask you a Queſtion, and then I ſhall anſwer for you in the Name of the Priſoner——

*Judge.* Why don't you act oftener than you do?

*Priſ. Becauſe I can't.*

*Jud.* Why do you act *ſo* often as you do?

*Priſ. Becauſe 'tis my Intereſt.*

*Jud.*

*Jud.* Why don't you act the capital Characters?

*Priſ. Becauſe I can act others oftener, and the Houſes the ſame.*

*Jud.* Why don't you give the Town more Variety?

*Priſ. Becauſe the Town's contented with what they have.*

*Jud.* When will you give 'em more Variety?

*Priſ. When I want it.*

*Jud.* Why don't you engage Q——?

*Priſ. Becauſe I have* B——.

*Jud.* But the Town wants to ſee him.

*Priſ. Do they? I don't.*

*Jud.* Why don't you engage Q——, B——, C——, P——, W——, and all the beſt in *England?*

*Priſ. 'Tis better as it is.*

*Jud.* You may want 'em next Year.

*Priſ. Then I'll have 'em if I can.*

*Jud.* Suppoſe you can't?

*Priſ. I'll give Tea, as* F—— *does, and abuſe 'em when they are againſt me.*——

Thus a few ſhort Queſtions and Anſwers contain the whole Theatrical Syſtem

System of Politicks, and this little Catechism will be a thorough Explanation of every past Transaction at the Playhouse.

There are a Set of People, Mr. Manager, will be more troublesome to you, than the Town itself; I mean the Tribe of *minor Poets*, whose Works, if you don't admire and receive, you must expect to be made a Sacrifice to their injur'd Genius; you will be cut up with Satire and Invective, and be made as notorious in the Advertisements of the Day, as the *Anodyne Necklace*, or Dr. *C——m's Electuary*—— The Adventures of *Rhoderick Random* lead me to this last Reflection; where, indeed, you are finely carbonaded, and indeed with great Justice, tho' with little Mercy, if what the Author says himself of his Play be true, viz.——*That it is the best in all its Parts, that this, or any other Nation has produc'd.*

By this Time, I fancy, you don't know what to make of me, whether Friend, Enemy, or neutral; I vary my Subject, and fly from one Thing to another——I am a Sort of *Hussar*, I look out for Plunder every where, and if I can't get it in the Enemy's

Enemy's Camp, I am apt to look out for it in our own——I ſet out in my Title-page, under the Denomination of a Houſe-breaker, but I have robb'd you only of ſome few Errors, and therefore (as Somebody ſays in ſome Play) *have taken nothing from you, but what you might very well have ſpar'd me*; I have ſhewn too ſome Conſcience in my Theft, for I have at leaſt left as many behind, as I have taken away; and ſo,

*Dear G——,*

*Your humble Servant, &c.*

# FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM